Mount Wachusett Community College

Spring 2010

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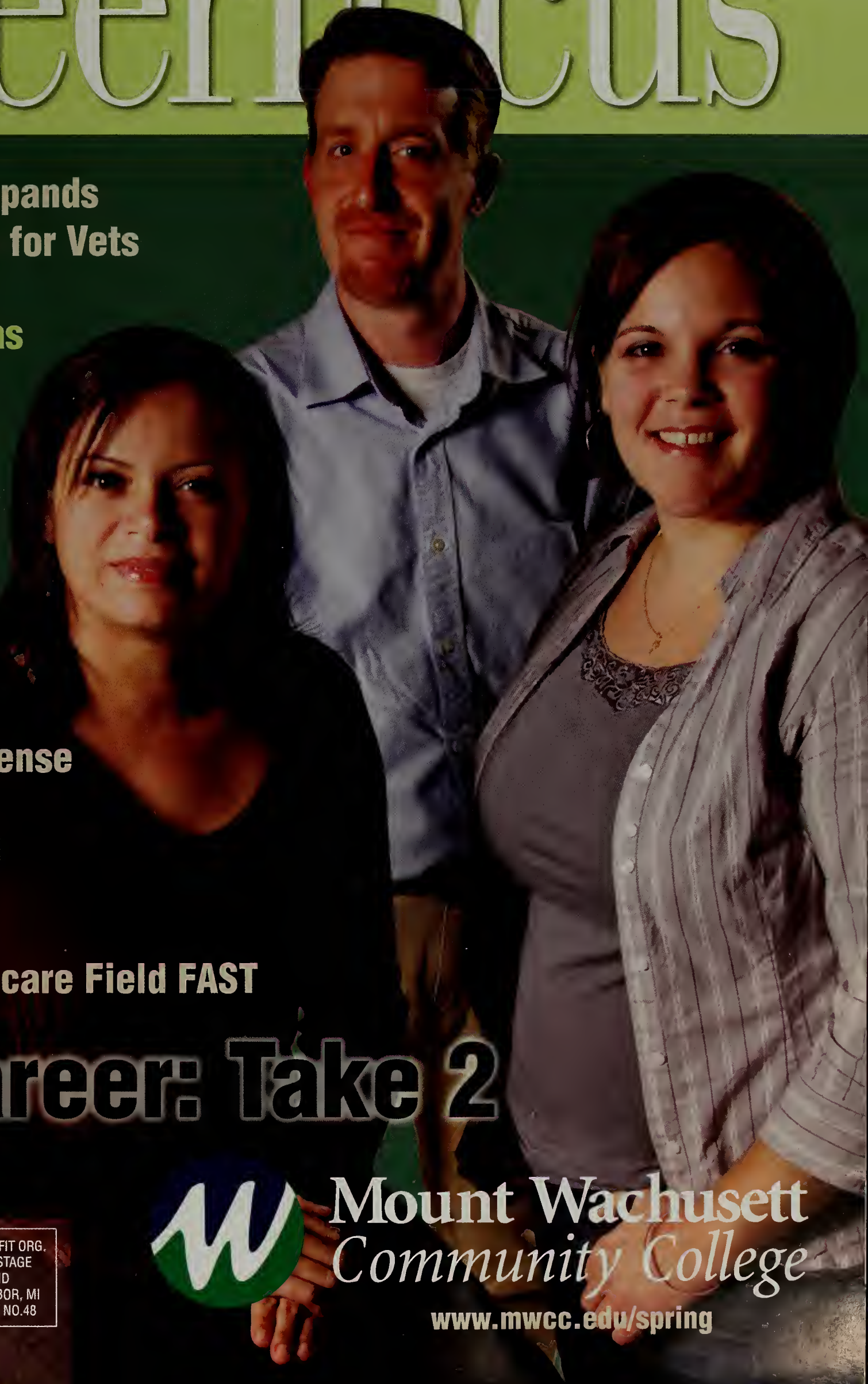
CareerFocus™



Post 9/11 GI Bill Expands Education Benefits for Vets

Surviving College as a Single Parent

Your Community, Your College
Mount Wachusett Community College A to Z

Tuition Dollars & Sense

Is a Career Helping People for You?

Get Into the Healthcare Field FAST

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Mount Wachusett Community College

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Mount Wachusett Community College

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444 Green Street, Gardner, MA 01440
Office hours:
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Email: admissions@mwcc.mass.edu

Leominster Campus
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Office hours:
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Email: leominster@mwcc.mass.edu

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(978) 630-9569
Email: devens@mwcc.mass.edu

Questions about the MWCC programs and services described in this publication should be directed to the Enrollment Center at (978) 630-9284, email admissions@mwcc.mass.edu. Comments and questions about the publication itself can be directed to the MWCC marketing department, (978) 630-9122.

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Publisher: ..... Daniel M. Asquino
President of Mount Wachusett Community College

Editor: ..... Nichole Carter

Editorial Support: ..... Janice O'Connor

Photography: ..... Dana Armstrong
Ed Collier, Michael Dwyer, Bob Mayer

Cover Photo: ..... Bob Mayer

Cover Design: ..... Chezelle Rodriguez

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CareerFocus™

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Elizabeth Casillas (left), Christopher Brown (center), and Chrissy Lajoie (right) all get a new start at MWCC.

Mount Wachusett Community College

Feature

Think you're

TOO BUSY, TOO OLD, TOO FAR BEHIND TO GO

back to college?
Find out why you're wrong.

Charles Morley is ready for the next stage of his life. The 40-year-old returned to college in the fall. His goal is to pursue his education at Mount Wachusett Community College (MWCC) toward his ultimate goal of becoming a nurse practitioner.

A long road

Morley attended college for a while during the late 1990s but did not complete it. Instead, he earned his A+ computer certification and a truck driver's license. He worked in technical support for a computer company for a while, until the industry suffered cut-backs and his hours were reduced to half-time. A single father, he then fell back on his truck driver's license and delivered oil for the past eight years.

Then, about a year and a half ago, Morley received a medical diagnosis that meant he no longer met qualifications required for driving trucks. He was laid off. Morley had to find a whole new life direction.

No time like the present

Always feeling passionate about helping people, Morley decided to work toward a career in the medical field. "I figured, the economy is bad and I can't find work, I might as well get an education and pursue my dream," he says. Morley enrolled in MWCC's Allied Health Concentration Degree, a program that allows students to complete required prerequisites before applying to one of MWCC's selective healthcare programs.

Morley is taking full advantage of every opportunity available—he just successfully ran for the Student Government Association. During the summer he enrolled in an American Red Cross program that provided him with quick training to help him find an entry-level job in the healthcare field. He plans to work in the field while pursuing his degree.

"I want to better things for myself and I want to be an example to my kids that education matters," says Morley. "I want them to see how things change for our family as I earn additional certifications and degrees."

It's never too late

Every year about six million adults head back to college. They range in age from 25 to 65 and sometimes beyond. Students once referred to as "non-traditional" are becoming more and more common on campuses. In fact, the over-40 college student is the fastest growing segment in higher education.

The reasons can range from a layoff to a long-deferred dream. There is no doubt that getting a college degree gets a bit more complicated with kids, mortgages and day jobs, but most adult students discover it's well worth it.

Glad to be back

For years Elizabeth Casillas, 37, always wanted to earn a college degree. However, being a single mother of three young children, her oldest son with cerebral palsy, she wasn't sure if she would ever have the time to do it.

As her children grew older and went to school, she suddenly felt that she had more time. Casillas talked to an advisor and decided to pursue her interest in computers by majoring in Computer Information Systems.

While she originally thought that she would earn an associate degree and then would be done with her education, she is now seriously considering pursuing her bachelor's degree.

"Going to college and having a family is possible, and well-worth it," she says, "It has changed my life for the better."

Are you happy?

Many would-be students aren't clear on a direction yet. They might not be happy with their current job, they might know they want something else, but they're not sure what it is.

If you find yourself in a job that neither pays the grocery bill nor feeds your spirit, it's time to start asking yourself "what's next?"

Pay attention to the warning signs says Rene Carew, a personal coach and the author of *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Discovering Your Perfect Career.* If you hate getting up in the morning, constantly feel bored at work, feel tired, sluggish, drained, these can be signs that

Helpful Websites for Adult Students

Adult Student Center – Specifically for adult students returning to college: www.adultstudentcenter.com

Changing Course – Discover the right career for you: www.changingcourse.com

Free Application For Federal Student Aid – All you need to apply for federal grants and loans: www.fafsa.ed.gov

Super College – Find out about scholarships and plan your return to college: www.supercollege.com

America's Career Info Net – Tons and tons of great information on careers and college: www.acinet.org

(Left) Charles Morley
MWCC Student Government
Association At Large Representative

something isn't going right in your life and it could be your job.

Explore your options

If you realize that you're complaining all the time, losing confidence in yourself and feeling unappreciated and unrecognized, something is definitely wrong. Carew recommends keeping a journal for a while to help you recognize the patterns. If it becomes clear that your job is the problem, it's time to act.

Your decision to return to school probably is going to be the result of some soul-searching. The first step is to explore—yourself and your values, skills, interests, hopes and dreams. Then explore the job options that fit your goals. And if the result is a career that requires more education, start planning how you can make that happen.

Find the silver lining

Other times, you don't get to make the decision to leave a job. If you're laid off, you have a whole other set of emotions to explore. "It's happening to so many people," says Carew. "It's hard to find someone who's never been laid off."

"Don't blame yourself, don't try to go it alone and don't deny the pain," she says. A major life change like a job loss has three distinct phases you'll need to proceed through to come out successfully at the other end: an ending, a transition and a new beginning.

Mourn the loss but also remind yourself of all the other things that are still intact: friends, family, your skills and experience. Then take time to explore the next move and prepare for another job.

Find the money

"Going back to school really is an investment in you," says Kelly Tanabe co-author of *501 Ways for Adult Students to Pay for College*. If you're changing careers, you're making an investment in a career that you enjoy more, she says. But even if you're staying in the same profession, you're making a financial investment that will pay off in a better salary after you finish your degree.

Elizabeth Casillas
MWCC Computer Information
Student and mother of three.

Not just for kids

Although it's a little bit harder to find scholarships for adult students—the money is still out there, she says. Make sure that you investigate the numerous scholarships available from private sources such as professional organizations, corporations, schools and colleges. Websites such as Tanabe's supercollege.com are a good place to start your search. Don't forget to check your local newspaper, talk to your college instructors and your counselors for leads, too.

Just as important, take time to fill out a FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid). It's available online and at any college financial aid office. "No matter what you think your financial situation is, the FAFSA taps you into over $129 billion available from the federal government to pay for college," says Tanabe. Some of this money comes in the form of grants, which don't have to be paid back, and some in the form of low interest loans, which do have to be paid back.

And there are some advantages to being older and having a job. Often you can test out of classes if you have extensive work experience in the field—saving you both time and money. If you're working while you go to school, many businesses will fund all or part of your tuition if your classes relate to your current profession.

Keep all those plates spinning

Here's the truth—it's not going to be easy. School takes commitment. You're going to have to make some serious decisions about your time and money. Can you find the money to quit your job and go back to school full time? Should you work part time? Do you have to work full time and fit in classes at night? When will you study?

In some cases it might be worth it to live frugally for a couple years so you can benefit from that degree as soon as possible. Other times a more measured pace makes sense.

Ask yourself, "How much happier will I be? Do I need this degree sooner rather than later? How much will it change my life?" recommends Tanabe.

Sit down with your family and talk about it frankly; get everyone on board—explain why you're doing this and ask them to pitch in, maybe by doing more chores and expecting fewer vacations for a while.

Many students have to experiment to see what works for them. Morley is hoping to find a job in the healthcare field that is flexible enough to work around his classes, caring for his children, and completing his homework.

Casillas attends part-time and takes a mix of on-campus and online classes so that she can be home for her children when she needs to be. She works on homework between classes and mostly while her children are sleeping.

Feature

Tuition Dollars & Sense

The increasing costs of tuition nationwide may make you wonder how you are going to pay for college. MWCC can help! Through the financial aid office at MWCC, college is possible for students from all different backgrounds.

Federal grants, state aid, student loans, institutional and non-institutional scholarships, are a few of the resources available to you. Other opportunities include college work-study, employer reimbursement and college-specific scholarship programs.

MWCC has resources for you to take advantage of and to help you succeed! Call the MWCC financial aid office at (978) 630-9169 or go to www.mwcc.edu/financial. **CF**

Attention parents, graduating high school students, and adults returning to college – now is the time to apply for financial aid!

College Dollars

Get started with a FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid)

About half of all MWCC students receive financial aid to help pay for their education. Even if money is limited, it shouldn't be a barrier to your education. You can qualify for state and federal grants, various college scholarships, and government or private loans. To see what funding you may qualify for, take the following steps:

1. **Get a PIN** (Personal Identification Number) at www.pin.ed.gov. A PIN is your electronic signature for the U.S. Department of Education and is required to complete your FAFSA. If you are a dependent, your parents are also required to have their own PIN.
2. **Complete the FAFSA.** You can access and complete a FAFSA at www.fafsa.ed.gov. This is very important, because you can't receive federal financial aid without a complete FAFSA on file. You'll want to be sure to list MWCC's Title IV code, 002172, as your first school of choice.
3. **Return your paperwork.** MWCC's financial aid office will send you the paperwork needed to complete your financial aid package. Then, all you have to do is fill it out, sign it and return it. It's that easy.
4. **Request your transcripts** or GED records, and have them sent to MWCC's Enrollment Center.
5. **Optional: Apply for MWCC scholarships.** You don't have to take this step, but, why not? You have nothing to lose, and plenty of dollars to gain. Scholarship applications are available at the MWCC financial aid office or online at www.mwcc.edu/pdfs/scholarshipapplication.pdf. To be eligible, you must apply by March 10.

Take the next step...

Talk to a staff member in the MWCC financial aid office today! Call the MWCC financial aid office at (978) 630-9169 right away to find out which programs might work for you. You definitely don't want to miss out on your opportunity to get help with college because you missed an important deadline. Look us up at www.mwcc.edu/financial, where you'll find all the information and application forms you'll need.

Scholarships

Scholarships are a great way to pay for college. And it can be easy to get one! The financial aid office at MWCC distributes hundreds of scholarships each year. These scholarships are both institutional and private, both for continuing students and incoming freshmen. Mount Wachusett Community College Foundation, Inc. provides over $220,000 annually in scholarship funding to MWCC students through 40 named scholarship funds. These awards are made possible through gifts by generous donors who understand the burden of rising educational costs.

Where can I find out about scholarships?

MWCC has information about many of the scholarships available at www.mwcc.edu/financial. There are also lots of private scholarship opportunities available, ranging from organizations, large companies, religious groups, booster clubs, PTAs and philanthropic groups, to name just a few. MWCC's financial aid office has a listing of private scholarships. You may also wish to contact your local library for further references on additional scholarships. MWCC also recommends the following scholarship search websites: www.fastweb.com and www.scholaraid.com. These two sites are reputable, and best of all, don't cost a cent to use.

MWCC Foundation, Inc. provides over $220,000 annually in scholarship funding to MWCC students through 40 named scholarship funds.

Surviving College as a Single Parent

A difficult, but not impossible path

With a two-year-old daughter in tow, Melissa Torres moved from Las Vegas back to Warwick, Mass. in 2005 after service in the Marines Corps, the end of an unhappy relationship, and spending a year as a bartender at a casino. "I was at a point in my life where I knew I had to do something," says Torres, a single mom who had unsuccessfully applied to several jobs before finding one that simply helped her to get by. Torres began attending Mount Wachusett Community College (MWCC) with the goal of earning an associate degree so she could find meaningful employment.

However, then her daughter was diagnosed with an Atrial Septal Defect, a hole in the wall of the heart, and had to have open-heart surgery. Through this experience, Torres developed an interest in science. At the same time, she was doing very well in her studies. Her goal of earning an associate degree and quickly entering the workforce grew into a dream of becoming a doctor. In 2007, Torres graduated from MWCC and transferred to Smith College. Torres continues to work hard. "Being a single parent is challenging," she says. "However, I figure it will be challenging whether I work, go to school, or both. At least this way, I am improving our opportunities for the future."

The challenges

It is difficult enough to be a college student—combine that with the demands of being a single parent, raising your family and possibly working and it may seem overwhelming. In addition to finding time to study, completing homework assignments, and possibly tutoring, many single parents face transportation and childcare issues. The multiple challenges of a single parent pursuing his or her educational dreams truly create a juggling act that requires planning and patience.

The salvations

Patrice Karsh, author of *The Single Mother's Survival Guide*, is adamant that the most important thing single parents can do is to accept that they can't do it alone. Based on her own experience, Torres agrees. She credits her parents and friends for their ongoing support and help with childcare. She credits MWCC's Visions Program (for non-traditional, first-generation, and low-income college students) for providing her with academic, counseling, and advising support. She credits the GI Bill, financial aid, and scholarships for helping her to pay for college. The list goes on and on.

According to Deirdre Moran, career counselor at MWCC, the first step for single parents planning to return to college is writing down their academic and career goals, "Be realistic about what you can reasonably handle and realize that because of your many responsibilities, it will probably take you longer to complete your degree." Part of your planning should include finances, childcare and identifying any and all additional support from family and friends.

Once a single parent enrolls in college, they should inquire about the availability of an advisor or counselor who is familiar with the challenges of being a single parent returning to college. That advisor can point the student in all of the right directions to seek out the support services that will help them be successful. According to Moran, "At MWCC, we recognize the unique challenges of our single parent students as well as the wonderful contributions they can make to our college community."

Moran suggests that single parent students get to the Academic Support Center early and often if they need tutoring from one of the professional or peer tutors. They can meet with career and transfer counselors to create their academic and career plans, as well as the job shadowing coordinator to provide them with a job shadowing opportunity. There are also many clubs and activities where single parents can meet other students with children, in particular the MARC Club (Mature Adults Returning to College). Research indicates that students who feel connected to their college community, even if they are part-time, are often more successful.

You still need a life

Finally, as a single mom or dad juggles the many roles they've taken on, they need to take care of themselves too. Take time for exercise, stay rested and try to eat healthy foods. Don't forget to give your children the family time they need and depend on. For instance, make every Friday night "Family Night" with a movie and popcorn or play board games and have a make your own sundae party. These fun, family times don't have to cost a lot, it's about relaxing together and enjoying your family. Remember, your academic dreams and goals benefit you and your entire family.

Torres' advice? Rely on your support systems. "It's hard enough being a single parent. Let people in," she says. "Set a foundation of family and friends you can count on during hard times when quitting might foolishly seem like the only choice. Also, talk to counselors, faculty, and staff at 'the Mount.' There is a whole network of people there who want you to succeed."

Mount Wachusett Community College: *A Haven for Veterans,* Then and Now

By Janice O'Connor

Local veterans returning from the Vietnam War described Mount Wachusett Community College (MWCC) as "a haven" during those turbulent times. Some four decades later, the college continues to provide a pathway to new opportunities for men and women who have served the country in the military.

A growing population

Since the introduction of the Post 9/11 GI Bill, MWCC has experienced a 24-percent increase in veteran students, in keeping with the enrollment increase at colleges and universities across the country as service men and women tap into a new, expanded benefit package available to those who have served since Sept. 11, 2001.

"Due to national media attention about the new Post-9/11 GI Bill, coupled with the diminished economy, more veterans are returning from service ready to take advantage of their expanded educational benefits," says John Walsh, MWCC's director of admissions and a veteran of the U.S. Navy Reserve.

The history

The Serviceman's Readjustment Act – the original GI Bill enacted in 1944 – offered federal aid to help veterans adjust to civilian life in the areas of health care, home and business acquisitions and especially education, by providing tuition, books, equipment and counseling services. Under the act, more than half of the 15 million men and women who served in the armed forces during World War II took advantage of these educational benefits by attending colleges and universities and other post-secondary training programs across the country.

More than two million veterans participated in this program during the Korean War era, and more than eight million during the Vietnam War era. In recent years, many others took advantage of the opportunities under the Montgomery GI Bill. Now, the Post-9/11 GI Bill is offering generous support for educational expenses to the two million veterans who have served in the years following the 2001 terrorist attacks.

Based upon the length of service, veterans are entitled to receive a percentage, up to 100 percent, of the following: the cost of tuition and fees up to the highest in-state undergraduate rate (to be paid directly to the college or university); a monthly housing allowance; and a textbook stipend up to $1,000 per academic year.

The new bill includes several other provisions that make it more flexible than the previous bill in meeting the needs of today's service men and women. Additional items include an eligibility timeframe extended from 10 years to 15; no $1,200 contribution required to participate in the benefit; and a provision to transfer benefits to a spouse or dependents.

Keep the momentum going

Attending college right after military service has tremendous advantages, explains Christopher Brown, a U.S. Air Force veteran of the Persian Gulf War and now a Physical Therapist Assistant student at MWCC.

"It's very advantageous for a veteran coming out to not just take any job. Get your education," Brown advises. "Veterans have preference for a large majority of federal and state jobs, but the pool of veterans is now larger. By getting your degree, you will stand out from the rest of the pool of applicants."

Brown serves as president of the newly-formed Veterans Group on campus, a student organization comprised of day and evening students who communicate largely online to share information and support on benefits and other veteran issues. As a veteran who was eligible for education benefits under the Montgomery GI Bill, Brown said he is encouraging incoming student veterans to pursue their degrees before their benefits run out.

"When people get out of the military, they're still wired for achievement," he says. "Your own individual discipline and motivation to perform is the greatest advantage. As time goes by and you don't go back to school, you're risking never coming. The longer you spend out of school after leaving the military, the greater the risk that your benefits will expire."

Veteran-friendly

Brown, who plans to transfer to a four-year college or university after graduating from MWCC in May, finds Mount Wachusett to be very veteran-friendly. "It's a good college, and there's plenty of opportunity," he says.

"When you come to Mount Wachusett and you're a veteran, there is one point of contact for your GI Bill benefits. You're not going through 50 people like you

Christopher Brown, a U.S. Air Force veteran of the Persian Gulf War and now a Physical Therapist Assistant student at MWCC

"It's very advantageous for a veteran coming out to not just take any job. Get your education. Veterans have preference for a large majority of federal and state jobs, but the pool of veterans is now larger. By getting your degree, you will stand out from the rest of the pool of applicants."

Christopher Brown

Members of the Montachusett Regional Vocational School Marine Corps Junior ROTC participated in the dedication ceremony of the Northeast Veteran Training & Rehabilitation Center. The center, to house wounded veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and their families, is being constructed by Veteran Homestead, Inc. on MWCC's Gardner Campus.

might at a larger school. You go over and ask to see Joyce Maynard and she walks out from behind her desk to help you."

Maynard, MWCC's Veteran Administration certifying official, says the college has a long history of serving veterans. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, MWCC had a campus at Fort Devens when it was an active military base, providing access to higher education to active duty service men and women right in their own backyard. Not only does MWCC continue to operate a satellite campus at Devens, but active duty service men and women are still taking advantage of MWCC's educational offerings by enrolling in online courses, an option several students chose while serving in Iraq and Afghanistan.

MWCC is also one of 1,100 colleges and universities participating in the Yellow Ribbon program, which offers additional tuition and fee assistance to veterans who are eligible.

"We're very grateful that our veteran population consists of students like Chris who feel so strongly about veterans receiving an education and go the extra mile to give back to others," says Maynard.

"Veterans are coming here for convenience, a quality education, online classes and small class sizes," Brown says. "It's a good transition from the military to college. You can be very anonymous if you would like to be, but the help and support and camaraderie is here if you desire it. The school is good about transferability of credits for military service. Even if you were in the infantry, you usually get some type of credit," he says.

"I believe this college supports its student veterans. If a veteran needs additional support and help, this college is more than happy to provide it. At a larger university, you won't necessarily get that type of individual attention."

New Post-9/11 GI Bill Expands Educational Benefits to Veterans

Beginning Aug 1, 2009, veterans who have served for a minimum of 90 days active duty on or after Sept. 10, 2001 may qualify for the new Post-9/11 GI Bill (Chapter 33). This new program provides increased benefits for veterans pursuing an approved education program at an approved college or university.

To be eligible for the Post-9/11 GI Bill, veterans must have received an honorable discharge and served at least 90 aggregate days on or after Sept. 10, 2001, or have been discharged with a service-connected disability after 30 continuous days.

Based upon the length of service, veterans are entitled to receive a percentage, up to 100 percent, of the following: the cost of tuition and fees up to the highest in-state undergraduate rate (to be paid directly to the college or university); a monthly housing allowance; and a textbook stipend up to $1,000 per academic year.

The length of service after 9/11 determines a veteran's maximum benefits. Those serving 36 months and those serving at least 30 continuous days and discharged due to a service-connected disability are eligible to receive 100-percent of their tuition and fee costs covered by the Veterans Administration.

The Post-9/11 GI Bill includes several other provisions that make it more flexible than the previous bill in meeting the needs of today's service men and women. Additional items include:

- Eligibility timeframe extended from 10 to 15 years;
- No $1,200 contribution required to participate in the benefit; and
- A provision to transfer benefits to a spouse or dependents.

Veterans who are currently using GI Bill benefits and those who have paid into Chapter 30 may also qualify for Chapter 33. Since the Post-9/11 GI Bill can only be used at a degree-granting institution and there are many tiers of eligibility, all beneficiaries are encouraged to discuss with a VA representative the benefits under each chapter before electing into the new Post-9/11 GI Bill.

For more information from the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education regarding veteran education benefits, visit www.mass.edu/veterans or call (617) 994-6914.

(Source: Massachusetts Department of Higher Education)

Feature

Get Into the Healthcare Field FAST

By Nichole Carter

Erin Jablonski always wanted to be a nurse. However, as the mother of a young daughter, going to college full-time for an extended period of time just didn't seem like an option. She needed to work too so that she could support her family.

Therefore, Jablonski broke down her goal of becoming a nurse into manageable steps that allowed her to work in the healthcare field while continuing her education toward becoming a nurse.

Breaking down a career goal

Jablonski enrolled in training to become a certified nurse aide, a program that can be completed within a matter of months, and upon its completion, swiftly went to work in a nursing home. From there, she was able to work and attend classes. "Working in healthcare complemented what I was learning in the classroom and helped me to build relationships in the field," said Jablonski.

From there she earned her certificate in Practical Nursing at Mount Wachusett Community College (MWCC), a program that typically takes a year to complete, and then progressed to the MWCC Nursing Degree, a program that typically takes two years to complete."I was able to gain valuable experience working in the field while earning my degree," says Jablonski.

Climbing the ladder

MWCC's healthcare certificate programs allow students the options of pursuing a career after graduating in healthcare, or using their education to obtain a job in the field while they continue their education, just as Jablonski did. "Working in healthcare while furthering your education in the field looks great on a resume and provides valuable experience and networking opportunities that pave the way for your advancement," says Eileen Costello, MWCC's dean of the School of Health Sciences and Community Service Programs.

Employer incentives

Several employers offer incentives and sometimes pay for their employees to continue their education in healthcare. "As an incentive to pursue my Nursing Degree, my employer helped me pay for my education and promoted me to administrator of an assisted living unit and an Alzheimer unit," says Jablonski. Also, she was able to obtain another position with a visiting nurses association on the weekends after graduating from MWCC. "I never would have qualified for this job as a recent graduate if I didn't have all of this healthcare experience behind me," she says. Jablonski is now pursuing a bachelor's degree in nursing from Fitchburg State College.

Growing opportunities

Despite a lackluster economy, the healthcare field has held its own. The industry has added more than a half-million jobs since the recession started, while most other industries cut workers and slashed payrolls ("Is Healthcare Still a Promising Field?," *U.S. News and World Report,* September 23, 2009). Costello says that the job security and earning potential are great incentives for those who are already passionate about working in the healthcare field. "Those who enter the field should be committed

to making people's lives better, prepared to work long hours, and recognize that it is challenging, but rewarding work."

In this article, you will find programs at MWCC that will help you to enter into the healthcare field FAST. Most of these programs can be completed in as little as one year (excluding any required developmental coursework or prerequisites). MWCC's nurse aide program can be completed in as little as one semester. These programs will help you to begin a career after graduating or continue your education in the field.

Allied Health Certificate

This program helps students to build enough skills to quickly enter the healthcare field. Depending on the courses you select, you

Climbing the Healthcare Career Ladder

After graduating, students who entered a short-term certificate may want to consider continuing their education in one of MWCC's healthcare associate degree programs:

- Complementary Healthcare (massage therapy* or yoga teaching tracks)
- Medical Assisting
- Nursing*
- Physical Therapist Assistant*

An articulation agreement with Quinsigamond Community College (QCC) also exists for those interested in starting at MWCC and applying to QCC's Radiology Technology program.*

** A selective program requiring additional application components. The process is competitive and space is limited.*

"A short-term training certificate can help students to get their foot in the door. Healthcare is a 24/7 industry, and those who work in the field can often flex their schedules to continue their education, gain experience while earning a degree, and many employers will help pay for their education."

Eileen Costello
Dean of the MWCC School of Health Sciences and Community Service Programs

could pursue a career as a nursing assistant, phlebotomist, EKG technician, Reiki practitioner, yoga instructor, or nutritional aide. "We highly recommend this program for those who are thinking of continuing their education in healthcare," says Costello. "A short-term training certificate can help students to get their foot in the door. Healthcare is a 24/7 industry, and those in the field can often flex their schedules to continue their education, gain experience while earning a degree, and many employers will help pay for their education." This program will also help students complete necessary prerequisites required before they are able to apply to a selective healthcare program.

Nurse Aide Training

Nurse aides have direct contact with long-term patients in hospitals, nursing care facilities, and mental health settings. They provide hands-on care and perform routine tasks under the supervision of nursing and medical staff. They help patients to eat, dress, and bathe. They also answer calls for help, deliver messages, serve meals, escort patients to operating and examining rooms, make beds, and tidy up rooms. Aides sometimes are responsible for taking a patient's temperature, pulse rate, respiration rate, or blood pressure. They observe patients' physical, mental, and emotional conditions and report any changes. MWCC has a one-semester credit program as well as a noncredit program.

Practical Nurse Certificate

Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) provide care for sick and injured patients under the direction of physicians and registered nurses. They take vital signs, prepare and give medications, apply dressings, observe physical and mental changes in patients, collect samples, maintain patient hygiene, and attend to physical, mental, and spiritual needs. The college credits earned in this program may be applied toward a nursing degree. The PN Certificate is approved by the Massachusetts Board of Nursing. Graduates take the National Council Licensure Exam for Practical Nurses (NCLEX-PN). This is a selective program, which means that the application process is competitive. Applicants should complete prerequisites and then apply by September 1.

Medical Office Certificate

The Medical Office Certificate program provides students with the skills and knowledge needed in a medical office environment: medical secretarial procedures, medical terminology, coding and billing, word processing, and medical machine transcription. Medical office staff may answer phones, order supplies, handle correspondence, bill patients, complete insurance forms, and transcribe dictation. They also handle bookkeeping, greet patients, schedule appointments, arrange hospital admissions, and schedule surgeries. This program is also a great lead-in to MWCC's Medical Assisting Associate Degree.

Medical Coding & Billing Certificate (pending)

A Medical Coding & Billing Certificate is proposed at MWCC for fall 2010. Medical coders assign codes to medical diagnoses, procedures and services for which the healthcare providers will be reimbursed. Medical billers facilitate the claims paying process from the time a service is rendered by a healthcare provider until the balance is paid. If you are detail-oriented, have strong computer skills, and are seeking a career in healthcare, the Certificate in Medical Coding & Billing may be for you.

For more information about any of the programs listed in this article, contact the Enrollment Center (978) 630-9284, email admissions@mwcc.mass.edu.

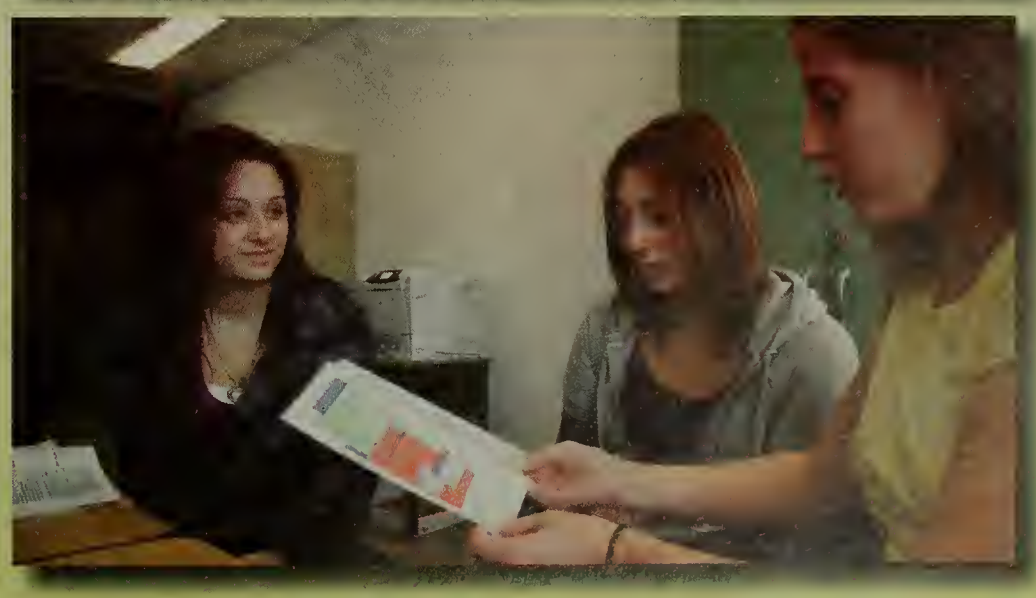
Economic Recovery and Jobs in Healthcare

The American Reinvestment and Recovery Act is projected to save or create 3.5 million jobs, many in the healthcare field. Here is an overview of how the plan affects the field.

The stimulus: $87 billion in assistance to Medicaid, $19 billion to accelerate adoption of health information technology, $10 billion for medical research and facilities upgrades.

Short-term outlook: The government estimates that healthcare stimulus projects will create hundreds of thousands of jobs–and not just for highly-trained medical providers. According to Laurence Shatkin, career expert and author of *Great Jobs in the President's Stimulus Plan*, "Stimulus funding for extended COBRA insurance and Medicaid will create many associate-level jobs, including licensed practical nurses, medical assistants, and radiologic technologists." MWCC has programs to launch you into any of these careers.

Long-term prognosis: Healthcare was a great career choice before the stimulus, and it's even better now. Patient care jobs will show continued strong growth.



Feature

Helping Others and Coming Home Happy

Improving the lives of others proves to be a rewarding career choice

By Nichole Carter

Chrissy Lajoie worked in an office setting for six years until one day she realized that it just wasn't for her. "I always loved working with children, but didn't go to school for that because I thought I wouldn't make enough money," says Lajoie. However, one day she felt she needed to pursue her original dream—she decided to make a change.

Lajoie enrolled in the Early Childhood Education (ECE) program at Mount Wachusett Community College (MWCC). "I love the program. I am excited about working with kids," she says. "I am excited to work in a field that I am passionate about. You can make such an impact with children."

Happiness and fulfillment

It's a common scenario. Many people choose careers for the wrong reasons, or they "fall" into a job they aren't passionate about. Sometimes, down the road, they are forced to make a change—they are laid off or they just decide it's time to do something different. According to a 2007 University of Chicago study, the way people feel about their work significantly impacts their happiness. So, it's important to like what you do.

The study found that people in professions that focus on serving others reported greater levels of happiness. "The most satisfying jobs are those involving caring for, teaching, and protecting others and creative pursuits," says Tom W. Smith, director of the General Social Survey (GSS) at the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago. Many pursue careers because of how much money they can make only to learn later that the job doesn't give them a sense of satisfaction. Lajoie experienced this first hand, "I am not a sit behind a desk kind of person. I realized that I would rather do something I enjoy."

If you feel that your calling is to work with people, MWCC offers several options including ECE, Human Services, and several healthcare programs. "Many students use their associate degree to work in their field while pursuing higher degrees," says Deirdre Moran, MWCC career counselor. "Opportunities and earning potential in these fields grow substantially for those who continue their education after MWCC."

Moran points out that MWCC's associate degree programs are an affordable option for the first two years toward a bachelor's degree, and the associate degree gives students a credential if they wish to work in the field while continuing their education. Also, Moran points out that MWCC's ECE and Human Services programs transfer seamlessly to Fitchburg State College, only 13 miles from MWCC. "Many students appreciate that continuing their education is so convenient," she says.

Early Childhood Education

"Along with traditional-age students right out of high school, several career-changers, stay-at-home-moms whose kids are now is school, and classroom aides enroll in MWCC's ECE program," says Dr. Rosanne Morel, chair of the ECE program. "These students find that they love being with children and want to make a living doing it."

A degree is increasingly important in this field. The state Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) is moving toward greater education requirements for childcare works, preschool teachers, and paraprofessionals. Because of this, Morel sees many returning to college to meet certification requirements. "If your goal is to obtain certification to work with children, as associate degree will be necessary," says Morel. "These higher education standards ensure quality care for children."

Morel points out that there are many options for ECE students. "ECE provides a great foundation for those who want to pursue a career caring for children ages 0-5, or for those who want to transfer to a four-year college and pursue ECE or elementary education," she says. What's more is that many students receive scholarships to help fund their education in this field (if they qualify and meet deadlines) (see page 11). "With the movement to raise the standard of care for children, funds are increasingly available to help those pursuing an ECE education," says Morel.

One of the great benefits of MWCC's program is a learning laboratory located at the Garrison Center for Early Childhood Education, right on-site at the Gardner Campus. "This center, run by Montachusett Opportunity Council, presents an opportunity for students to directly experience and observe what they learn in the classroom," says Morel.

Human Services

We all know someone who is facing challenges in life such as drug or alcohol addiction, spousal abuse, anxiety and depression, learning disabilities or other adversities. Luckily there are people out there who want to help those who are struggling with these issues. Professionals in the human services field get the highest satisfaction out of watching clients make healthy and positive decisions.

According to Janice Gearan, chairperson of MWCC's Human Services program, it's a great field for those who feel the calling to help others. "We have some students who simply have a strong inclination to be of service," says Gearan. "Other students have been helped during the course of their lives and in turn feel a strong desire to help others." Gearan points out that a common quality for those in the field is empathy, the ability to relate to the feelings of others.

Human services is a fast growing field. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the number of social and human service assistants is projected to grow by nearly 34 percent between 2006 and 2016, which is much faster than average for all occupations.

Like the ECE program, earning potential substantially increases for those who continue their education after earning an associate degree. "We have several students who earn their associate degrees and pursue a career at that level," says Gearan. "For many others, the degree helps them get a job in their field while they continue on for bachelor's and master's degrees." A Human Services-Board Certified Credential will be available in the future for those with associate degrees and higher. The credential aims to increase the visibility, credibility and recognition of the important role of human services professionals.

A wide range of careers and opportunities are available in this field, depending on the population and issues you are interested in. Agencies exist for those with mental health issues, addictions, socialization issues, and much more. Moran suggests deciding on a population you feel passionate about, an issue you feel passionate about, or both. Students can then fine tune their program electives to complement these areas.

Real world experience is critical to becoming a skilled human services professional. Gearan points out that MWCC's program requires an internship, and service learning experiences are built into the curriculum. Other strengths include experienced faculty, and a new capstone course for the program.

Chrissy Lajoie
Early Childhood Education Student

Funds and Scholarships Available for Early Childhood Education Students

Scholarships are available to students who meet qualifications and scholarship deadlines:

James Garrison Scholarship

For new and continuing Early Childhood Education students demonstrating financial need. Application deadline: March 10. Go to www.mwcc.edu/financial for more information on how to apply.

James Garrison Childcare Stipend

For full-time students who demonstrate financial need, have children age 2.9 to 5 enrolled at the Garrison Education Center at MWCC. Priority is given to Early Childhood Education majors. Application deadline: March 10. Go to www.mwcc.edu/financial for more information on how to apply.

Early Childhood Educators (ECE) Scholarship Program

This Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) Scholarship covers up the three courses per semester for those working in a EEC licensed program or enrolled in an ECE undergraduate program. For more information, go to the EEC's website http://www.eec.state.ma.us

Building Careers Grant

The Building Careers Grant, administered through EEC, provides financial assistance for teachers working in a EEC licensed center or family childcare Contact Dr. Rosanne Morel, at (978) 630-7441 for more information.

Healthcare

Those who want a career helping others also commonly pursue healthcare programs. Check out MWCC's healthcare article on page 8-9 or see the A-Z section on pages 13-16 to learn about MWCC healthcare programs.

For more information on any of these programs, contact the Enrollment Center (978) 630-9284, email admissions@mwcc.mass.edu

Renee Rountree

Returning to college for career #2... this time with new purpose

Renee Rountree wants a career that makes her look forward to going to work everyday. She has always loved working with and helping people—so, at age 49, after raising five children, she has decided to pursue a new career in Human Services. Although a great departure from her current career in health information administration, a field she had earned her bachelor's degree in from Northeastern University seven years before, she feels it will be well worth it to work in a profession she is passionate about. Rountree is enrolled at MWCC to complete perquisites required for the Master's in Clinical Social Work at Smith College.

"MWCC's Human Services program gives me the opportunity to delve into subjects that have always interested me," says Rountree. "One of the real benefits of attending MWCC is that the classes are small and interactive and the courses are taught by professors, not teacher's assistants, so you are learning directly from professionals with many years of experience in the field."

Facts AND Finds

More Education Means Better Health

It's no news that a college degree boosts your earning power and reduces the chances that you will be unemployed, but did you know it also protects your health?

A 2007 College Board online report, "Education Pays," reveals that education also has many health benefits.

- More college grads report excellent or very good health than do high school graduates.
- Only 9 percent of college graduates smoke cigarettes compared to nearly 30 percent of high school graduates.
- Over 60 percent of college grads exercise vigorously at least once a week compared to 31 percent of high school graduates who do.
- College graduates are more likely to have jobs with healthcare coverage than their high school graduate counterparts.

The Effects of the Stimulus on Education Costs

Struggling with college costs? Here are three major ways the Recovery Act can help put money in your pocket, as described by Mark Kantrowitz, publisher of financial aid websites FastWeb.com and FinAid.org.

1. The stimulus increases the maximum Pell Grant from $4,731 to $5,350 and new eligibility requirements mean an additional 800,000 students will qualify. The maximum grant will rise to $5,550 next year.
2. It expands the Hope Scholarship tax credit for the 2009/2010 tax years, extending it to millions of additional families.
3. It includes $200 million for federal work-study, enough for an additional 181,000 recipients.

According to Kantrowitz, financial aid is especially important for community college students. "They are eligible for Pell Grants and Hope Scholarships just like students at baccalaureate institutions. But instead, many of them work full-time while pursuing their education. This limits the amount of time available for studying, and many drop out without obtaining a degree. Applying for federal student aid can help them reduce their work hours and graduate. More than 1.5 million community college students would have qualified for a Pell Grant in 2007-08, but did not submit the application."

Students can apply for both the Pell Grant and federal work-study funding at www.fafsa.ed.gov. They can claim the Hope Scholarship tax credit on their 2009 and 2010 federal income tax returns.

Financial Aid Myths

Literally billions of dollars in financial aid is available to those who need help paying for college. Yet lots of misinformation clouds the facts about what type of aid is available and who is eligible. This edition, and future CareerFocus editions, will focus on dispelling some of the myths.

Myth #1: College Is Just Too Expensive for Our Family

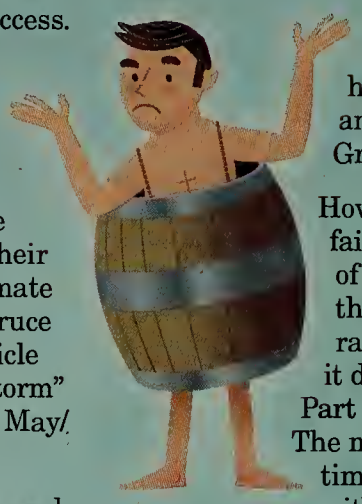
Despite the media hype about rising college costs, a college education is more affordable than most people think, especially when you consider college graduates earn an average of $1 million more over their careers than high-school graduates. MWCC costs about $4,800 yearly, and a public baccalaureate institution will cost about $13,500 per year for in-state students (including housing). There are expensive schools, but high tuition is not a requirement for a good education.

Myth #2: My Income, or my Parents' Income, Is Too High to Qualify for Aid

Aid is intended to make a college education available for students of families in many financial situations. College financial aid administrators often take into account not only income but also other family members in college, home mortgage costs, and other factors. Aid is awarded to many families with incomes they thought would disqualify them.

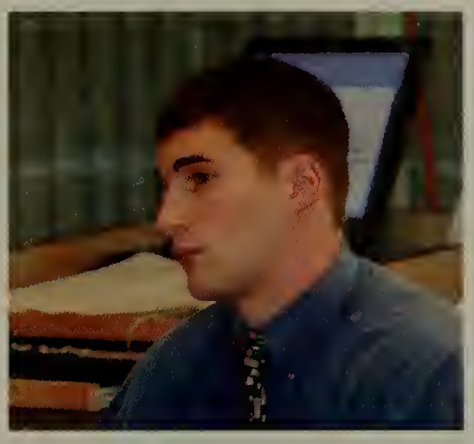
Fail Now, Succeed Later

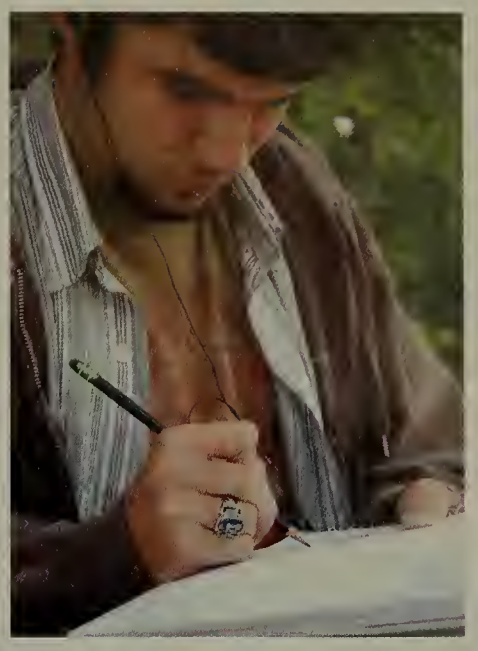
Embrace failure. It may be the real secret to success. Perhaps the early failures of wildly successful people like Steven Jobs, J.K. Rowling and Michael Jordan are the real source of their resilience and ultimate success suggests Bruce Grierson in his article "Weathering the Storm" (*Psychology Today*, May/June 2009).



There are so many good lessons to be learned by a significant failure, that you may want to get right out there and fall on your face so that you can get up brush off and get on with it. "Adversity, setback, and even trauma may actually be necessary for people to be happy, successful and fulfilled," writes Grierson.

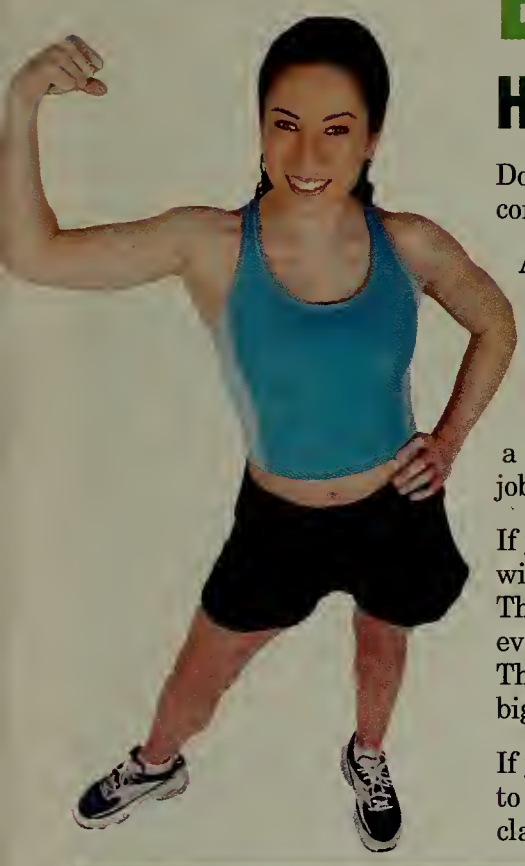
How can you turn failure into the kind of learning experience that transforms you rather than letting it drag you down? Part of it is honesty. The more you take the time to commiserate with others, address your feelings and look for alternatives, the easier it is to move on. The other part of it is attitude. The more you can cultivate a sense of optimism and humor that allow you to accept responsibility and create a new start, the more likely you are to eventually succeed.





Exercise Your Options

How's your career health?



Do you have a good job with good pay? Do you like coming into work every day? If not, why not?

A job you love is important to your happiness. And your happiness is important to your health. Yes, it's all tied together. But you knew that.

If you're just deciding what you'd like to do with your life, take a look at MWCC's classes and programs. With a certificate or associate degree you can get into a good job in two years or less.

If your goal is a bachelor's degree, our transfer programs will get you halfway there—and at about half the cost. Through the 3 plus ONE program, some colleges will even let you transfer as many as 90 MWCC credits. That's about three years toward a four-year degree, and a big savings.

If you're ready to change careers or need more education to earn a promotion, our evening, online, and hybrid classes make it convenient to attend part-time.

Check out your options. Remember it's your health and your happiness we're talking about.

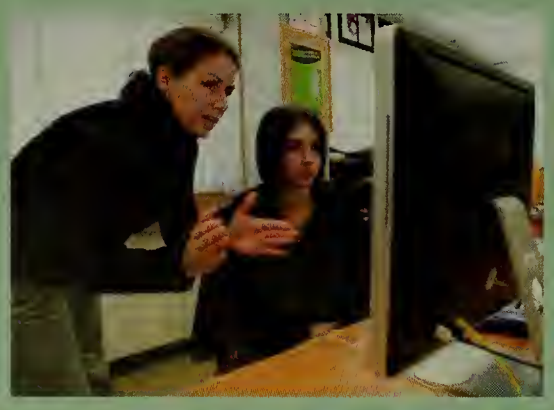
Legend
D-can be completed during the day
DE-can be completed entirely at the Devens Campus
E-can be completed in the evening
G-can be completed entirely at the Gardner Campus
L-can be completed entirely at the Leominster Campus
W-most of the classes for this program are offered online
S-Admission to this program is selective

Salary data below and on the following pages is from the median ranges posted by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, extracted September 30, 2009
* Based on full-time employment
**Salary data from Salary.com

Earnings may vary based on experience, education, and location.

Area of Study	About	Program	Mode of Completion	Median Income*
Administrative Assistant	Administrative assistants perform a variety of administrative and clerical duties necessary to run an organization efficiently.	**Office Assistant Certificate**	D, E, G, L, W	$21,830 to $34,250
Allied Health	Gain skills to enter the healthcare field. This program will allow you to complete prerequisites before applying to one of MWCC's selective healthcare programs.	**Allied Health Conc. Degree**	D, E, G, L	Varies according to industry
		Allied Health Certificate	D, G, W	Varies according to industry
Art	Prepare to transfer to a four-year college and pursue studio art or an art-related program in administration, education, or design.	**Art—Traditional Program Degree**	D, G	Varies according to industry
		Art—Professional Track Degree	D, G	Varies according to industry
Automotive Technology	Not manufacturer-specific, giving you maximum employment flexibility in auto tech. fields.	**Auto. Tech. Degree**	D, G	$11.96 to $21.56 per hour
		Auto. Tech. Certificate	D, G	$11.96 to $21.56 per hour

Area of Study	About	Program	Mode of Completion	Median Income*
Biotechnology/ Biomanufacturing	A top-growing industry. Biological technicians use microscopic living organisms or materials to help manufacture drugs and other substances.	**Biotech./ Biomanufacturing Oegree**	D, E, DE	$17.17 per hour
		Biotech./ Biomanufacturing Certificate	D, E, DE	$17.17 per hour
Broadcasting & Electronic Media	Prepare for careers in the television, radio, recording, multimedia, and cable industries. Acquire both technical and communications skills.	**Broadcasting & Electronic Media Oegree**	D, G	Varies according to industry
Business Administration	Gain practical skills and a broad view of business, preparing you for positions in sales, accounting, advertising, customer service, and more.	**Business Admin.— Career Degree**	D, E, G, L, W	Varies according to industry
		Business Admin.— Transfer Degree	D, E, G, W	Varies according to industry
		Business Admin. Certificate	D, E, G, L, W	Varies according to industry
		Computer-assisted Accounting Certificate	D, E, G, L, W	$24,540 to $37,780
		Small Business Mgt. Certificate	D, E, G, L, W	Varies according to industry
Clinical Laboratory Science	Prepare to play a vital role in patient care by performing diagnostic clinical laboratory procedures.	**Clinical Lab Science Oegree**	D, G, S	$26,430 to $41,020
Complementary Health Care (CHC)	Learn complementary/holistic approaches to maintaining health and supporting recovery from injury or illness.	**CHC—Massage Therapy Degree**	D, G, S	$40,050 to $59,976**
		Massage Therapy Certificate	D, G	$40,050 to $59,976**
		CHC—Yoga Teacher Conc. Oegree	D, E, G	Varies according to industry
		CHC Certificate	D, E, G	Varies according to industry
Computer Graphic Design (CGD)	Gain visual design, communication, and computer graphic skills necessary to obtain an entry-level position as a graphic designer.	**CGO—Print Oegree**	D, G	$30,600 to $53,310
		CGO—Print Certificate	D, G	$30,600 to $53,310
		CGD—Web Oesign Degree	D, G	$30,600 to $53,310
		CGO—Web Design Certificate	D, G	$30,600 to $53,310
Computer Information Systems	Prepare for entry-level positions in the info. tech. field in areas such as web application development, e-commerce, networking administration, and desktop application support.	**Computer Information Systems Degree**	D, E, G, W	$32,110 to $53,640
		Electronic Communications & Oigital Media Certificate	E	$39,490 to $50,813**
		IT Support Specialist Certificate	D, E, G, L, W	$32,110 to $53,640



Area of Study	About	Program	Mode of Completion	Median Income*
Criminal Justice (CJ)	Prepare for a career in law enforcement or corrections or to transfer to a four-year college.	**CJ—Corrections Degree**	D, G	$28,320 to $46,500
		CJ—Law Enforcement Degree	D, G	$35,600 to $59,880
		Law Enforcement Certificate	D, G	$35,600 to $59,880
Dental Hygiene	Prepare for a career as a dental hygienist, providing preventative oral health care services.	**Dental Hygiene Degree**	D, S, ***Burbank Campus Only***	$24.63 to $35.67 per hour
Early Childhood Education (ECE)	Pursue careers working with young children as teachers or administrators in preschools, Head Start, daycare centers, and elementary schools. Prepare for a career or to transfer to a four-year college.	**ECE—Career Degree**	D, E, G	$16,320 to $35,380
		ECE—Transfer Degree	D, E, G	$43,580 to $48,690
		Elementary Ed. Conc. Degree	D, E, G	$43,580 to $48,690
Emergency Medical Technician	EMTs provide vital attention caring for and transporting the sick or injured to medical facilities.	**EMT Training (non-degree program)**	E, G	$21,290 to $35,210
Energy Management (pending approval for Spring 2010)	Prepare for a career as an energy auditor or energy technician. This program has been proposed for spring 2010.	**Energy Management Degree (pending approval)**	D, E, G	$18.31 per hour
		Energy Management Certificate (pending approval)	D, E, G	$18.31 per hour
English-as-a-Second Language	For speakers of other languages. Gain English skills to assist you in your daily life and/or to prepare to enter a degree or certificate program.	**English-as-a-Second Language (non-degree program)**	L	N/A
Fire Science	Prepare to become a firefighter through coursework in building construction, fire prevention, arson investigation, and more.	**Fire Science Degree**	E, G	$29,550 to $54,120
Fitness Leadership & Exercise Science	Prepare for a career or to transfer in areas including exercise science, exercise physiology, and fitness management.	**Fitness Leadership & Exercise Science Conc. Degree**	D, E, G	$33,730 to $56,130
		Fitness Leadership & Exercise Science Certificate	D, E, G	$18,010 to $41,040

Area of Study	About	Program	Mode of Completion	Median Income*
General Studies	For those whose educational goals are not yet defined. A flexible curriculum, allowing you to explore many disciplines.	**General Studies Degree**	D, E, G, L	Varies according to industry
Human Services	Enter a rewarding career helping others who are experiencing personal and socialization issues.	**Human Services Degree**	D, E, G, L, W	$20,350 to $32,440
		Human Services Tech. Certificate	D, E, G, L	$20,350 to $32,440
Liberal Arts & Sciences	Highly-recommended for those who plan to transfer. Provides the requirements of the first two years of a bachelor's degree. Several concentrations are available including: communications, elementary education, history & political science, fitness leadership & exercise science, and theatre arts.	**Liberal Arts Degree**	D, E, DE, G, W	Designed for transfer
		Liberal Studies Degree (several concentrations available)	Varies according to concentration	Designed for transfer
Manufacturing Technology	Prepare for a career in plastics manufacturing. This program is a joint venture among Nypro, Inc., Fitchburg State College, and MWCC.	**Manufacturing Technology—Plastics Degree**	E, Courses offered at Nypro, Inc.	$24,347 to $34,517**
Medical Assisting/Office	Medical Office will prepare you for an administrative position in healthcare office. Medical Assisting provides a clinical component as well.	**Medical Assisting Degree**	D, G, W	$21,970 to $31,210
		Medical Office Certificate	D, E, DE, G	$23,250 to $34,210
Natural Resources	Prepare for environmental occupations in horticulture/floriculture, agriculture, forestry, recycling, materials handling and more.	**Natural Resources Degree**	D, G	$34,000
Nursing	Nurses promote health, prevent disease, and help patients cope with illness.	**Nursing Degree**	D, E, G, S	$47,710 to $69,850
		Practical Nurse Certificate	D, DE, G, S	$31,080 to $43,640
Paralegal	Gain skills to work in a legal setting: gathering and analyzing facts relevant to a legal dispute, performing legal research, drafting legal documents, and preparing witnesses and evidence for presentation at legal proceedings.	**Paralegal Studies Degree**	D, E, G, L, W	$33,920 to $54,690
		Paralegal Certificate	D, E, G, L, W	$33,920 to $54,690
Phlebotomy	Collect blood and other specimens for diagnostic laboratory testing.	**Phlebotomy Training (non degree program)**	E, G	$11.25 to $12.15 per hour
Physical Therapist Assistant	Physical therapist assistants implement treatment procedures in the rehabilitation of injured, ill, or debilitated individuals.	**Physical Therapist Assistant Degree**	D, DE, G, S	$33,840 to $49,010

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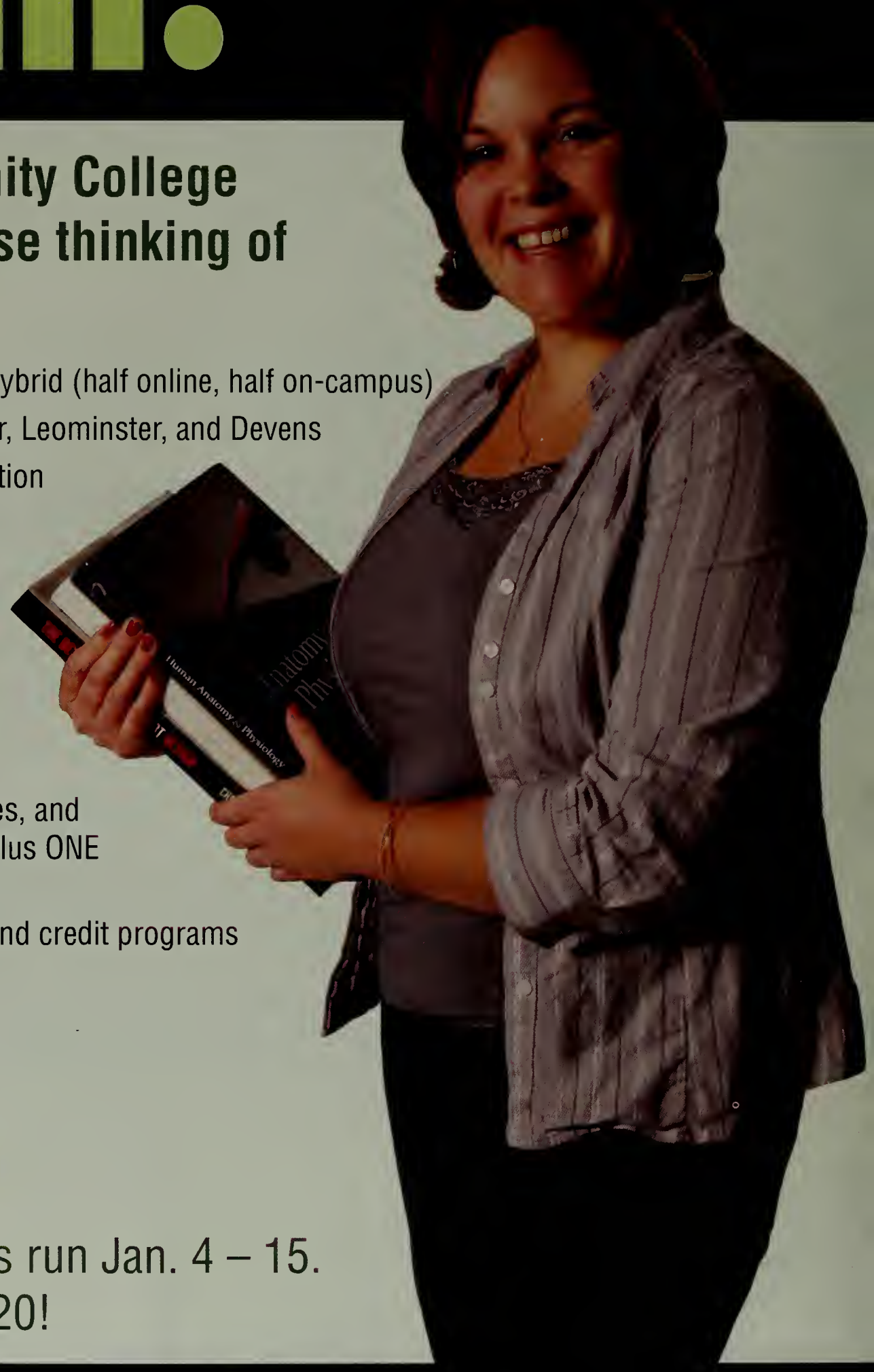

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